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# THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

## PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

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### THE EVOLUTION OF PRAGMATISM<sup>1</sup>

THE history of the movement called pragmatism has been a confused one. Because of the unfamiliarity of the theory or because of the nature of the debate considerable misapprehension has resulted on both sides of the discussion. It is a matter for congratulation, therefore, that the situation has of late begun to clear. Criticism has exerted vigorous pressure from without the school. The inner development of the diverse elements in the movement has been promoted by prolonged reflection. There has existed withal a large amount of essential agreement among the pragmatic leaders from the beginning. The resultant effect has been twofold. On the one hand, opinion has crystallized concerning certain fundamental principles. On the other, differences of view, actual or potential, have developed concerning positions which enter into the central doctrine, or which are correlated with it. In Spencerian phrase, both integration and differentiation have characterized the development of the movement. And both will be illustrated, if we go on to specify some of the principal lines of progress:

1. Pragmatism as a methodological doctrine. Concerning this point, at least among English and American pragmatists, opinion is unanimous. In the first instance, it is agreed, and fundamentally, the principle is a principle of method. Whatever else the doctrine may suggest, to whatever further conclusions it may lead or tempt, it proposes primarily a method of thought and inquiry—a method which is inherent in all thinking when this is rightly understood, one which has been victoriously followed by the natural sciences, and which is now introduced into philosophy for the latter's regeneration and revival. And the benefits of this method are held not to accrue to thought alone—it brings knowledge into touch with life and promotes action as well as cognitive work.

The school is once more agreed in the use which it makes of this limitation. The strict conception of the doctrine as a principle of

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Third International Congress of Philosophy, Sect. IV., *Logik und Erkenntnistheorie*, Heidelberg, September 2, 1908.

method forms its primary defense against the charge of positivism or agnosticism. This accusation is false, the pragmatists reply, or rather it is irrelevant, for in itself considered our view is not a theory of things, not a metaphysic, but a method of inquiry. It is compatible with various types of philosophical conviction. As a matter of fact, it is accepted by thinkers who come to diverse conclusions concerning the world and human life.<sup>2</sup>

It would be easy to raise questions here. For merely as method, pragmatism may be taken in narrower or wider meanings. Is it possible, for instance, to maintain the distinction drawn by James and others between the pragmatic method and pragmatism as a theory of truth?<sup>3</sup> Or, if this is practicable, is it perchance accomplished by construing the method in a vaguer rather than a more precise and definite sense? Further, and more generally, it may be queried whether the doctrine can be successfully confined at all within the methodological field. Can methodology itself, can "logic" be discussed without touching on broader issues which lead thought far afield? On such questions as these the thought-history of the recent past, say from the '60s of the last century onward, might throw some needed light. But as my purpose in this paper is not so much to criticize as to formulate, I pass on to a second principle on which the pragmatists are agreed:

2. Pragmatism is not individualism or subjectivism—as so many of the critics have contended. On the contrary, it is inherent in the doctrine to take account of the universal, objective factors in thought and life. The explicit statement of these positions has been developed by the pragmatists in rebuttal of hostile attacks. And they maintain that the unfriendly interpreters of their doctrine have taken advantage of the defects which are inevitable in the first formulation of new and pregnant views. However this may be, it is essential to note in the present situation the energetic repudiation of subjective conclusions by the pragmatic leaders. In this, of course, the emphasis varies somewhat with the different points of view. Schiller dwells upon the common or social moment in cognition. With him man is the universal measure, but man as *man*, not *qua* individual—since even Protagoras has been maligned by the Platonic interpretation of the principle.<sup>4</sup> James is more emphatic concerning the relation of truth and knowledge to "reality"<sup>5</sup>—to things of sense, or, in his varying phrase, the flux of sensations, and their relations;

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Schiller, "Studies in Humanism," pp. 16-21; James, "Pragmatism," pp. 43-55; Dewey, "What does Pragmatism Mean by Practical?" this JOURNAL, Vol. V., pp. 86-99.

<sup>3</sup> James, "Pragmatism," pp. 54 ff.; Dewey, this JOURNAL, Vol. V., pp. 85-88.

<sup>4</sup> "Studies in Humanism," pp. 38, 316-320.

<sup>5</sup> "Pragmatism," pp. 205 ff., 229 ff., 243 ff.

to the inner relations of ideas; to the fundamental body of truth previously established. Thought, he urges, is pent in or wedged in, even on the pragmatic theory, by its objective references, and the suggestion of subjectivism becomes a baseless charge. James's realistic tendency is evident here. In fact, he sometimes<sup>6</sup> fears that the humanistic form of the doctrine is "compatible" with solipsistic or agnostic views.<sup>7</sup>

Already, however, our discussion of method is verging on the pragmatic theory of truth. The same mingling of interests is involved in a third problem:

3. The relation of pragmatism to humanism. Humanism is more especially the work of Schiller, although Schiller has been inspired by the influence of James, and the latter also shares in many of his conclusions. In the hands of either, of course, the theory is not a new development of the movement, though one which has become more distinct and explicit as the movement in general has gathered force. In itself considered humanism is broader than pragmatism. It contains the latter, but goes beyond it. As defined by Schiller, it emphasizes an inclusive view of knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Psychology shows that, as a matter of fact, the cognitive processes are everywhere shot through with desire, emotion, will, even as they are always led on by interest and purpose. Logic, then, should take account of these factors, should endeavor to evaluate and regulate them, not ignore or reject them, as intellectualism so long has done. Thought is everywhere purposive and personal—its depersonalization forms the primary error of the non-pragmatic schools.

Humanism, so construed, is more hospitable than pragmatism to metaphysical conclusions. It also, as Mr. Schiller thinks, has a wider methodological value. Pragmatism he views as a type of logical or noetical theory. Humanism possesses "a method which is applicable universally, to ethics, to esthetics, to metaphysics, to theology, to every concern of man. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

The full explanation of this position must be left to its author. Evidently, however, differentiation of the doctrine is going on, even in the methodological sphere. The narrower pragmatic method and the broader methodology of humanism are not in all respects identical. And important issues depend on the adoption of the one or the other of the differing standpoints.

4. The varieties of the pragmatic method in its stricter meaning.

<sup>6</sup> *Philosophical Review*, January, 1908, pp. 15-17.

<sup>7</sup> Dewey also maintains the realistic character of his theory; cf. "Essays Philosophical and Psychological in Honor of William James," pp. 53-80.

<sup>8</sup> "Studies in Humanism," pp. 1-21.

<sup>9</sup> "Studies in Humanism," p. 16.

The discussion of humanism has brought the argument back to the subject of method pure and simple. The question must now be raised whether there are no distinctions incident to the pragmatic method narrowly interpreted, either internal distinctions or differences of application. This problem will be best considered under several subheads:

(a) The pragmatic method varies with its application to different subjects. This has been recognized of late by friend and foe. From the critical standpoint Professor Lovejoy has contended that there are thirteen different pragmatisms, just a baker's dozen, as we say in the English proverb.<sup>10</sup> Before Lovejoy, however, Schiller had emphasized the need for drawing accurate distinctions. Each cognitive act, he urges, involves a specific purpose. Accuracy demands, therefore, that account be taken of these various purposes and their respective implications.<sup>11</sup> And Dewey, in his noteworthy review of James's "Pragmatism," asks the crucial question, What for pragmatism does practical really mean? In reply, he distinguishes between the application of the term to objects, to ideas, and to beliefs. Applied to an object, it means "*the future responses which an object requires of us or commits us to.*" Applied to an idea, it refers to the changes which the idea "*as attitude effects in objects.*" Applied to truths or beliefs, it involves the question of "*value, importance.*" And these differences of meaning, he further argues, essentially bear on the interpretation of pragmatism itself and on the uses to which it may be put.<sup>12</sup>

On the last of these several applications Dewey dwells with special emphasis. And rightly so, for it raises the question of values. This calls for treatment under a separate heading:

(b) Pragmatism and judgments of value. Here distinctions must be drawn. In certain meanings of the term, value, pragmatism essentially involves evaluating thought. So much so, in fact, that it has been often charged that the pragmatic theory reduces truth entirely to the expedient, the useful, or the good. But the pragmatists repel the charge, and are themselves engaged in differentiating their doctrine. James recognizes the intellectual working of ideas as well as their direct furtherance of life.<sup>13</sup> Schiller defends alike the testing of science by its material results and the verification of religious postulates by their spiritual results.<sup>14</sup> Dewey, in the paper to which reference has just been made, defines valuation in the stricter sense

<sup>10</sup> "The Thirteen Pragmatisms," this JOURNAL, Vol. V., pp. 5-12, 29-39.

<sup>11</sup> "Studies in Humanism," *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> This JOURNAL, Vol. V., pp. 88 ff.

<sup>13</sup> "Pragmatism," pp. 213, 216-217.

<sup>14</sup> "Studies in Humanism," pp. 359-360, 362 ff.

as dealing with truths or beliefs which have already been accepted; and reaches the conclusion that such appreciation adds nothing to the evidence on which they rest.<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult at this point to speak without hesitation. It is possible that the writer does not fully grasp Dewey's position. In particular, two of his recent and characteristic utterances can with difficulty be harmonized in regard to the point now under discussion. The argument of "Beliefs and Realities"<sup>16</sup> bears decidedly in favor of the faith which is based on values. The review of James distinctly criticizes, though with consideration, the appeal to values in the decision of ultimate questions. If this divergence from the views of James and Schiller is fixed, it indicates a cleavage within the school. In any case, the discussion has suggested a fundamental problem, with which pragmatism is bound to deal and around which its inner development must in part of necessity center.

(c) The applicability of the pragmatic method, Or, in other words, to what subject-matters may it properly be applied? This question, as will be seen, is connected with the one preceding. For if the method is to be used in relation to transcendent questions, reliance must, at least in part, be placed upon evaluation. Or the problem may be conceived more broadly—whether the pragmatic method may at all extend its scope beyond experience, and the reorganization of the latter. The issue has been often pressed by critics from without. Some recent indications point to its emergence within the school itself. And this would seem a probable result. For once more we have come upon a vital problem, germane to the principles of the movement and needing solution in order to their exact determination and employment.

5. Pragmatism and metaphysics. So far we have considered pragmatism as method, with incidental references to its theory of truth. As such the doctrine has been distinguished from its metaphysical connections. Nevertheless, it easily allies itself with metaphysics, even with definite types of metaphysical conviction. Here, finally, evolution has been going on, and differentiation within the pragmatic group. James and Schiller are, perhaps, most nearly akin in their metaphysical, as in their noetical views. Freedom, pluralism, personality, theism, appeal to them both, though here and there differences of emphasis or of construction may be noticed. Dewey, in the paper quoted, has given intimations of a different doctrine. Speaking of the personal factor in the constitution of knowledge and reality, he suggests an interpretation of personality

<sup>15</sup> Pp. 89 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Presidential address before the American Philosophical Association, 1905; printed in the *Philosophical Review*, XV., 2, March, 1906.

quite other than that which is favored by his more humanistic colleagues: "According to the latter view, the personal appears to be ultimate and unanalyzable, the metaphysically real. Associations with idealism, moreover, give it an idealistic turn, a translation, in effect, of monistic intellectualistic idealism into pluralistic voluntaristic idealism. But according to the former, the personal is not ultimate, but is to be analyzed and defined biologically on its genetic side, ethically on its prospective and functioning side."<sup>17</sup>

As method, then, as epistemology, in its metaphysics, pragmatism is evolving. Integration and differentiation have both been taking place. The relative predominance of these two factors has in each instance been determined largely by the stage of progress reached. So it must also be in the future development of the movement. On the Continental situation the writer does not presume to pronounce. In Britain and the United States both tendencies seem destined to persist. But it is evident that the process of analysis and distinction has of late been gaining, and it seems likely that it will continue to gain ground.

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#### AUTOMATIC PHENOMENA OF MUSCLE-READING

IN the discussion recently conducted in this JOURNAL and elsewhere relative to the interpretation of so-called subconscious phenomena, the reader is confused by the rapid shifts in the arguments from the philosophical to the psychological level.

At times, apparently, the issue is wholly a matter of the writer's creed as to the mind-body relation. To a thoroughgoing parallelist, automatic phenomena just because they are physiological have also a psychical counterpart. To the interactionist, the maintenance of a causal relation between brain and consciousness makes lapsed awareness so easily accounted for in terms of the physiological that for him the sudden emergence or subsidence of consciousness causes no embarrassment. So far, the interpretation of the phenomena under dispute seems largely a matter of speculative choice.

But presently the level shifts in an attempt to realize intimately what consciousness is. As a matter of introspective self-respect, as well as of verbal sanity, one may feel a strong distaste for the conception of an unconscious consciousness, a distaste only partially overcome by Dr. Marshall's suggestion that consciousness be no longer defined as "awareness," but rather as "psychic existence,"

<sup>17</sup> P. 97.